SISTER NIVEDITA UNIVERSITY

Department of Fine Arts and Design

DISSERTATION

USE OF METAPHOR IN THE WORKS OF CONTEMPORARY PRINTMAKER OF KOLKATA

RIPARNA ACHARYA

Enrollment No: 2322220005008

Registration No: 230050089007

Use of Metaphor in the works of Contemporary Printmaker of Kolkata

Dissertation submitted for the degree of Master of Fine Arts (Painting)

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Submitted by: Riparna Acharya

Enrollment No: 2322220005008

Registration No: 230050089007

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Guide: Mainak Chakraborty

Co-Guide (if any) Nandini Ghosh

Student's Name: Riparna Acharya

Enrollment No: 2322220005008

Registration No: 230050089007

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Nandini Ghosh. 17.04.2025.

16.04.2025

Co-Guide's Signature with Date

Guide's Signature with Date

DECLARATION BY THE STUDENT

I hereby declare that the work which is being presented in this dissertation entitled "Use of Metphor in the woks of contemporary printmaker of Kolkata in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelors/Masters/Ph.D of Fine Arts in Painting in . is an authentic record of my own work carried out during the period from –Februay 2025- to April under the supervision of Mr. Pratap Manna Department of Fine Arts and Painting.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the UGC regulations, 2018 (*Promotion of Academic integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions*).

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Registration no. 230050089007

Department Fine Arts and Design.

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Introduction

Art plays a crucial role in preserving the tradition of any country , starting with painting and evolving into various art techniques like printmaking, performance art, sculpture and illustration arts. Printmaking is a unique medium in visual arts, reflecting the traditional complex .Despite being considered trivial, its infinite qualities make it closely tied to human experiences . It has a significant impact on everyday life, evolving through its original methodology and versatility.

Printmaking in Kolkata has long served as a powerful medium for both individual expression and collective reflection . Rooted in a rich artistic tradition that blends indigenous techniques with modernist innovations, contemporary printmaking in the city continues to evolve as a space for layered visual storytelling. Among the many devices employed by artists, metaphor holds a particularly significant role not only as a stylistic tool but as a means of emotions and cultural narratives.

This study explores the use of metaphor in the works of contemporary Printmaker in Kolkata and explores how metaphor functions in the visual language of contemporary art. Through close readings of artists like Atin Basak and Porag Ray , it reveals how prints become more than images.In these works , the seen and unseen coexist , and the metaphor serves as the bridge between the two.

Chapter 1

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PRINTMAKING IN INDIA

Evolution of printmaking

The evolution of printmaking in kolkata reflects a rich journey from colonial craftsmanship to contemporary artistic expression. In 1556, printmaking began evolving from traditional techniques to contemporary methods influenced by British artists and local innovations in India.

A long time ago before printmaking was being used commercially, Prints were used for mass production of newspapers,books,writing etc.Then, Artists, as they came to know about the multiple productions, they took a keen interest in printing to their own artworks for multiple sales. In 19th century Printmaking emerged as an art form where multiple techniques were developed including screen printing, woodcut, intaglio,engraving and lithography.

The arrival of printmaking to Bengal in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was a turning point in the region's art and culture history .The British East India Company developed a presence in Bengal . In the 1940s-50s , artists like Haren Das brought attention to wood engraving and etching, used to depict rural life with detail and realism, Artist like Somenath Hore revolutionized printmaking with social themes and experimental techniques.

Figure:2.Water Contrivance|Haren Das|woodcut|20.4cmx 28cm.

Figure:3. Untitled 3/20,1983|Somnath Hore|Etching

Development of printmaking in India

At the dawn of the 20th century, printmaking began to emerge as a creative artistic medium in India. . Till 1950's the activities of printing among artists were very limited. The use of woodblocks was already popular in India since ancient times and used as a state stamps.

In 1556, The first printing press was established in Goa by the christian missionaries. (Mukhopadhyay and Das , graphic Art in India 1850 -1950) In India they were fit who start printing on paper for spreading christian ideology.Only of Italian and Portuguese language printed there. Along with the press and other materials for printing, few engraved woodblocks were imported which were later printed in religious book. During this period printing activities started in different parts of India with the establishment of presses near Madras , Hooghly and Calcutta by christian missionaries .

Calcutta experienced the most significant growth in printing activities They published books and journals adorned with wood-cut illustrations and engravings to document their discoveries and journeys across India. Although they were produced by artists who never visited India, but they are an important

source of those early days .Later, gradually life became more structured and settled, people became more Interested in documenting pictures. Following that, engravers and professional artists started making their way to India. Starting from the 1760s, the East India Company supported professional British artists in working across major Indian cities, particularly Calcutta and Madras. Between 1767 and 1820, around sixty artists from various countries traveled to India.

While in India , they created a substantial collections of prints containing etching ,lithographs and engraving on different subjects including historical episodes , field sports ,portraiture, military events , costumes , daily life ,social life caricatures , various craftsmen and workers in their natural surrounding , nature printing ,illustrations of various bird and animals.in Calcutta .All the etchings were monochrome and stained with coloured inks .

In 1786, two prominent artist were William Danielle and Thomas Danielle they published the album Twelve perspectives of Calcutta ,featuring twelve original etchings ,worked and printed in Calcutta. In 1779, the East India Company set up its printing press in Calcutta, where foreign engravers and artists produced printed images and illustrations. . The local craftsmen learn the techniques of printing from European artists who worked there. In the

beginning , they were unable to hold on the techniques as it was not in their traditional practice, but gradually they adopted the process and learn to put their traditional skills to new applications .

Printing activities in India were dominated by Europeans until 1820s. But gradually it shifted towards Indian enterprises.(Mukhopadhyay and Das, Graphic Art in India: 1850-1950) The regular demand of wood cut blocks firmly developed printmaking into a business , and Indians also entered the mainstream of the printing business. They started incorporating engraved illustrations in printed books. A bengali book , "Oonoodha Mongal" printed at the press of Ferris and Co, Calcutta, in 1816 engraved by Ramchand Roy .

During this time, numerous illustrated books in the Bengali language were published in Calcutta, featuring illustrations created through wood engraving, woodcuts, and metal -engraving , etchings were executed by Indian artists..By the end of the second decade of the 19th century, the names of nine Indian graphic artists had emerged, including Ramchand Roy, Roopchand Acherjee, and Ramsagar Chakravorty , Biswambara Acherjee , Birchandra Dutta, Ramdoon Sarnakar , Madhav Das, Harihar Bondhopadhyay, Casheenath Mistree.

From the beginning of 19th century , woodblock printing was already gained popularity. Biswanath Dev setting up the first printing press in the Shobhabazar of Calcutta in around 1818. This area became a hub of printing activities and emerged as a book district in Calcutta by 1820. The famous woodblock print , known as the 'Bat-tala Prints' , was produced in the first half of the century as book illustrations. Bat-tala is a name derived from a giant banyan tree in the Shobhabazar area of Calcutta. These prints , inspired by kalighat paintings but centered on contemporary themes carried a modern sensibility and evolved into a thriving trade. Picture production expanded across various area including Shovabazar, Ahiritola,Dorjitola, Kumartuli, Simulia ,Garanhata and Baghbazar.

Bat-tala Printmaking is deeply rooted in Bengali culture and traditions , reflecting the artistic heritage and used n various ceremonies and festivals . The manual printing technique entails inking carved wooden blocks and pressing them onto fabric or paper to transfer the design. . Bat-tala artists were engravers who used wood blocks to create prints, with notable engravers such as Nrityalal Dutta , Hiralal Karmakar , Kashinath Mistry , Gopinath Swarnakr and Kartik Chandra.

Bat-tala printmaking had its own unique set of themes that distinguished it from other forms of printmaking in the region. Batttala prints known for the

popular folk art style. Characterized by satire, humor, and a portrayal of everyday life and scenes. The themes used in Bat-tala printmaking included

social commentary , cultural celebrations , festivals ,mythology and folkore political commentary ,gender , relationships,caricatures and satire.

Calcutta woodblocks were similar to Kalighat 'pat' artworks, reflecting social mode and times. Bat-tala prints were cheaper and featured subjects like Hara-Parvati ,Annapurna ,Mahabhanjan, Krishna-Leela and Gaur Chaitanya. Gradually By 1890s, The Battala Woodcuts desolate ,while Kalighat Pats desolate by 1930s. Demand declined with color Lithography printing, Battala woodcut prints in 'Jatra' enhance stage settings with vibrant, culturally rich visuals.These designs represent cultural motifs, mythological figures from the stories. They preserve traditional art forms and storytelling techniques contributing to overall ambiance and captivating the audience with vibrant visuals.

Battala Woodcut Prints

Figure:2 The battle between Rama and Ravana /Woodcut/ 28.5 x 40 cm

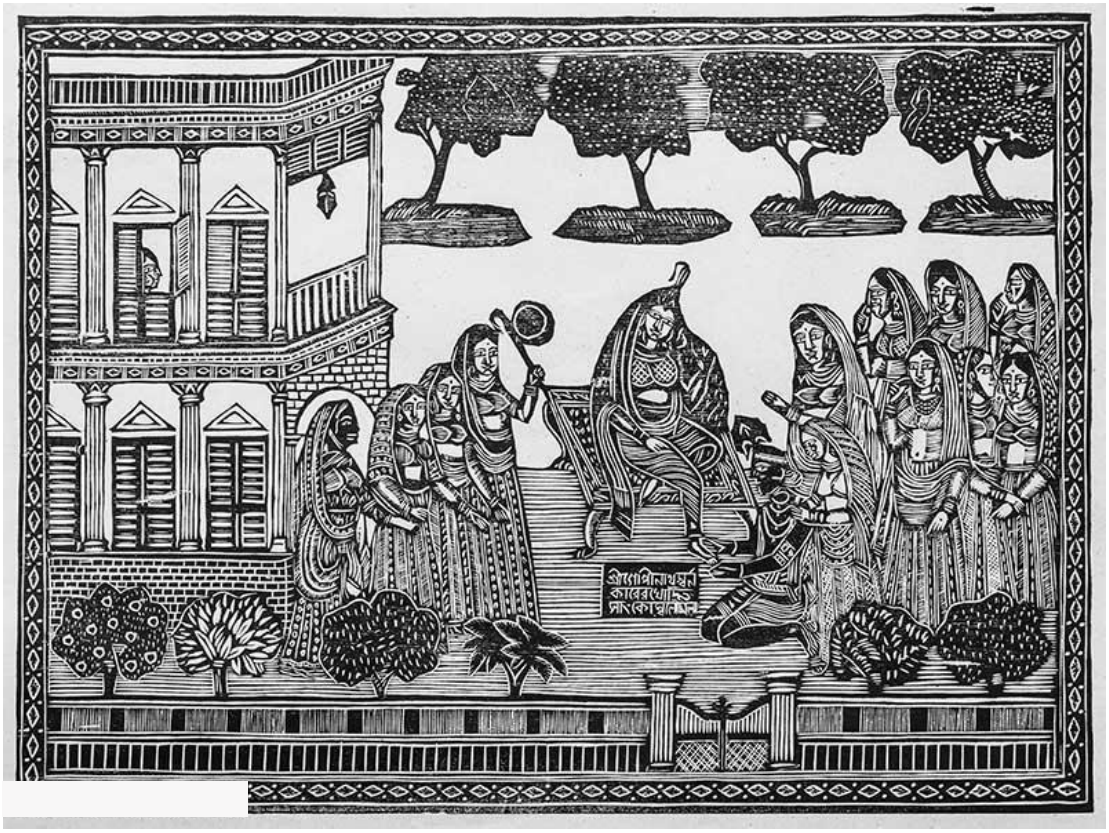


Figure:3 Mahabhanjan | 29.3 x 39.3 cm

Kalighat Paintings

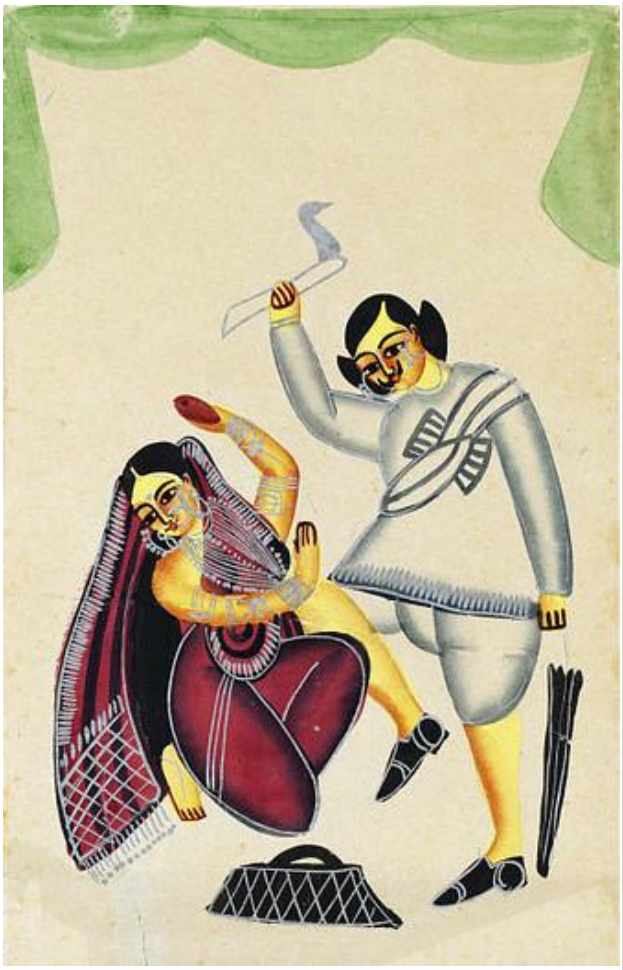


Figure:4. Nabin kills Elokeshi

Figure:5. Women Hitting a man with a broom

Chapter 2:

Metaphor in contemporary Art

Metaphor in art is a dynamic process which reflects on the ever changing landscape of technological advancements, evolving societal values , and cultural shifts. This is not a reflection but as a connection between past and present.Metaphor allow artists to speak indirectly using visual languages for deeper connection with their audiences. Metaphor in art not only enriches the the artistic landscape or visual language but also invite viewers to reconsider their interpretations or perceptions to engage with art.

Artists create a language in their work by representing feelings, ideas through images which allowing them to communicate abstract and complex concepts in a visual form.For example, an abstract painting use swirling colors to represent the complexity of human emotions capturing the nature of feeling that often difficult to express in words. The dynamic movements of colors can evoke a sense of serenity , depending on viewer's interpretation.

By using metaphor , artists can express their concepts that might be difficult , but as a viewer interpret metaphors based on their own experiences and perspectives, bringing their personal narratives into the dialogue with the art .This interaction not only enriches the viewer's experience but also adds layers of meaning to the artwork itself, making each encounter with the piece unique and deeply personal. Through this metaphor and interpretation, art becomes a living conversation between the creator and the audience, continually evolving with each new perspective.

Chapter 3:

Early life and Artistic Journey : Atin Basak

Atin Basak

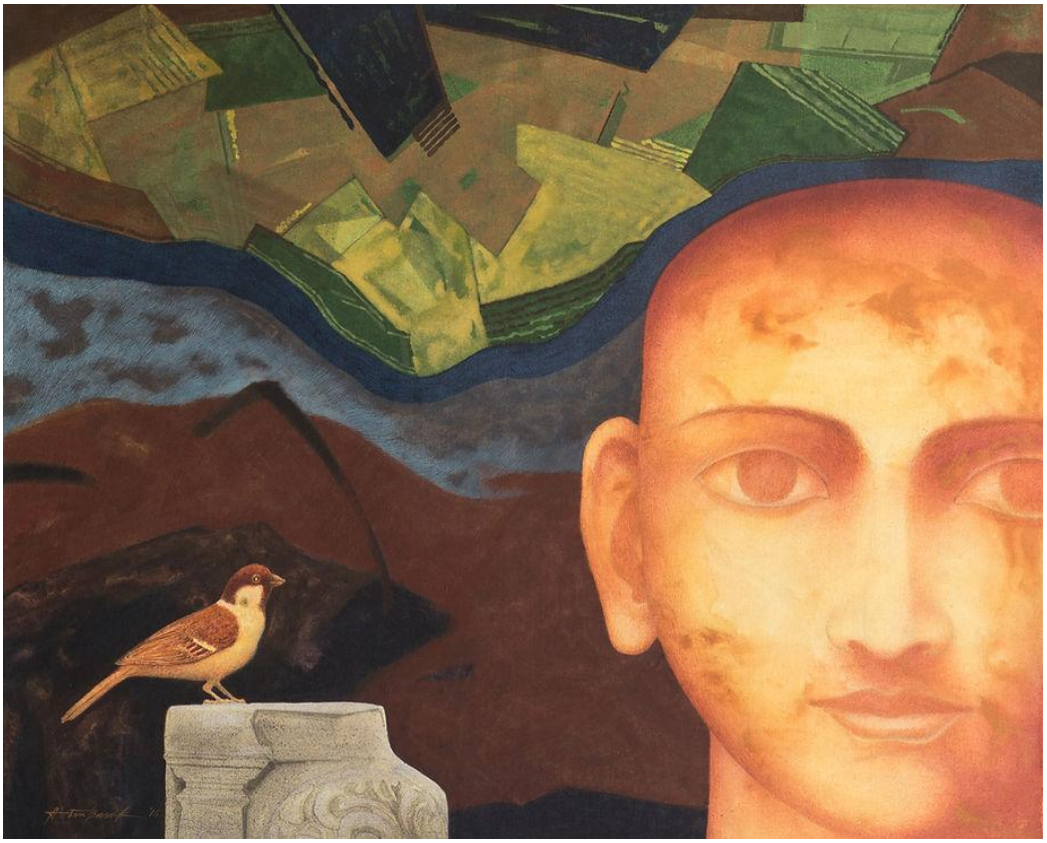
Atin Basak was born on 27th March,1996 in Kolkata .He is a prominent Indian Printmaker of kolkata. His family had shifted to Kolkata from Manikgunj, Dhaka (now in Basngladesh). He grew up in a ghinji office neighborhood in old central Calcutta .Name: 'Boithokh khana road ' .He spent his most of the time with his grandmother, almost all the time of the day. Atin was very shy in his childhood and he did not talk too much. Since then He lived in his own dream world , world of fantasy. He was a daydreamer . He loved being curled up there. Only his grandmother had access to that world. Atin's schooldays were spent in Mitra Institution, central Kolkata His art teacher Sukumar

Bhattacharya who was a brilliant mentor. Despite facing his personal challenges , including his father's battle with cancer , He graduated Bachelor of visual Arts in painting from Government college of Art and Craft, Kolkata in 1991, and later he completed Masters of Visual Arts in printmaking from Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1993.

He love to draw pictures, so he went to art college with the idea of learning to paint, but he had no idea that he would be an artist that day. His practices and behaviour pushed him that way, that he couldn't deny. Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose's paintings created fondness for the 'Bengal School Of Art'. He thought that was the way to go, he couldn't feel complacent about the teaching method of the Indian style department. Rather , he felt very comfortable in the printmaking class as there it was not mandatory to paint pictures of Tagore deities or rural Bengal and city life. He had full freedom to paint as he wished.

For him art is life, other than art he never did anything . Whatever going through in his life , is subject because when his father died around 1998 -2000 he really fell into a big trouble . But still that time death became his subject . afterwards,in his married life when he had a kid at that time his subject changed to the kid's life .Then , he worked with the feeling space and empty space . when he came to know he went to Hampi and thought about that he

would do something on Hampi . There ,he saw people who writing on the stones without conserving it .So in his feeling , we can see in Atin's painting one sparrow is over there.But today (like the abused ancient stones) the sparrow also missing ,here the living thing and the stone -a non living thing he create a connection between them through art .So visual language has changed over the years.



Artist: Atin Basak
Medium: Tempera on CanvasSize: 107cm X 92cmLocation: Evolve Back Kamalapura Palace, Hampi Year: 2016

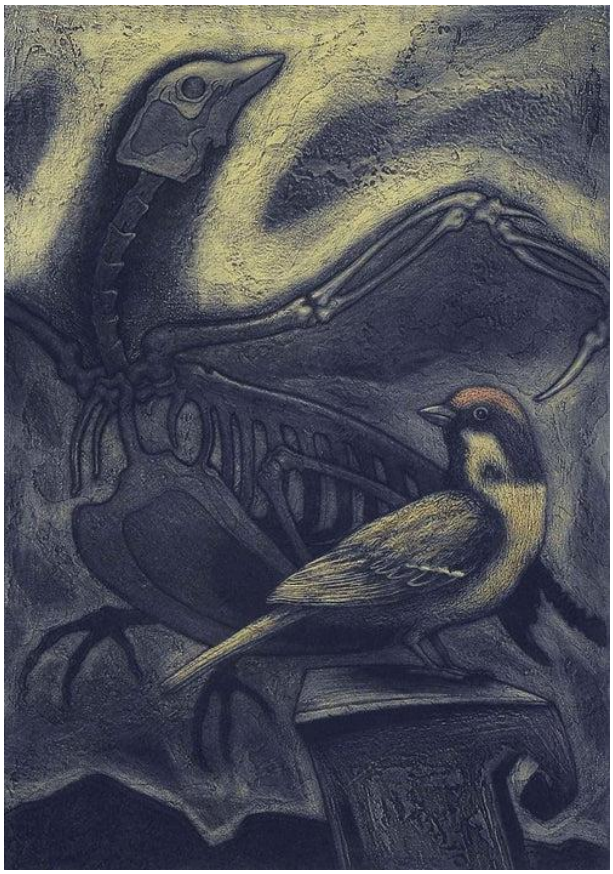


Figure:8 ‘Fossil (Life and Mortality) ‘

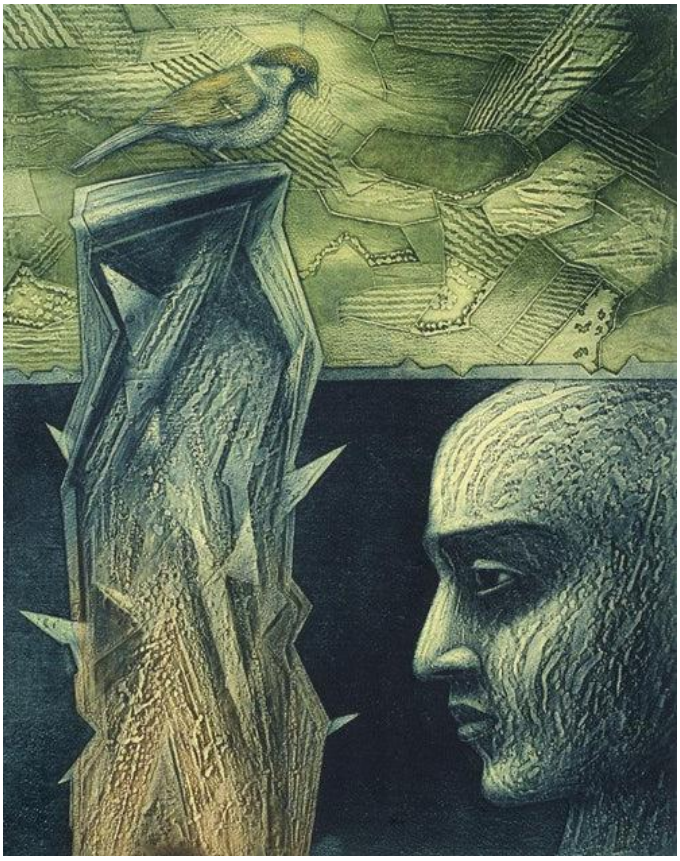


Figure:9 ‘Song of silence’ /Etching

Atin Basak’s etching shows a balance between lucidity and elegance, the personal and impersonal vision. He explores the thin lines which lie between in- animate and animate world. In his etching we can see the play of light and shade,and depiction of varied colours are noticeable. .

Artist's Interview

- Could you share your journey in art began ? How your experiences with printmaking?

Going to art college with the idea of learning to paint, I had no idea of becoming an artist that day.yes, I love to draw pictures . But I never thought that I would be an artist .Abanindranath Tagore , Nandalal Bose's paintings created fondness for the 'Bengal School Of Art'. That seemed to my path, I could not feel complacent about the teaching method of Indian style department.Rather I felt very comfortable in the printmaking classes.

- What kind of works themes were you exploring during your college years?

When I was in college I used to work on fantasy. I grew up in a wealthy family and I didn't have any crises. I used to work on whatever was happening in my life. I worked for the pleasure of my heart.

- Who are your early artistic influences or inspiration both from within Bengal and beyond ?

In my life I have been inspired by many people in my life . In Kolkata I have been inspired by Haren Das, in college life I have been inspired by many others. Bhupen Khakhar, Jyoti Bhat, Anupam Sud, Laxma Goud. I have been inspired by almost all the printmakers in India and I have interacted with them .

- Did literature, folklore, or local traditions play a role in your imagery?

No one becomes a human being by ignoring local traditions. They come in new ways one by one. It is never direct in any way. It becomes digest and then its extract comes out. It is all here.

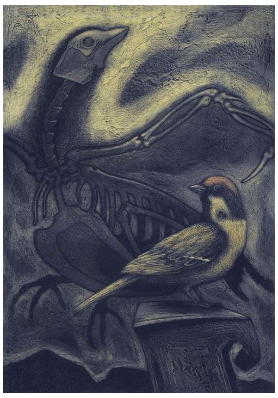
- How has your visual language changed over the years?

As I said, "For me, Art is not a separate subject. Whatever happens in life, I also appear in my work. When I worked on fantasy, I did a certain kind of work. After my father died, the language of acrobatics changed."

- You've worked extensively with etching and printmaking -what drew you to this medium and how has it served your story telling?

When I was studying at Government Art College, I had Indian Painting as my subject. I studied Indian Painting and then I felt a certain boredom in my Indian Painting. I learnt my techniques but through that I felt like I couldn't find my own language to express. I didn't like that kind of subject. That pushed me to the printmaking class. Where I was able to work in my own way. Then I thought I would do my Masters in printmaking and then I went to Baroda.

- Can you talk about a specific work where metaphor became a central role?



This is the work where metaphor became a central role.Everything here is a metaphor.

- What advice would you give to a young printmakers trying to build a layered rich visual language in prints?

I will tell everyone one thing, if you want to be an artist , you have to be an honest person. Know yourself, what do you want? We don't look at ourselves. We are too busy with others. Know yourself, love yourself, find out what is wrong with you, rectify it, and the work will come out like this.

Chapter 4:

Early Life and Artistic Journey : Parag Ray

Parag Roy

Parag roy was born in 1965 in Kolkata, he is a distinguished Indian printmaker and also a painter whose artistic journey is deeply rooted in Bengal's rich culture and artistic heritage.

Roy's childhood days , he was very fond of cartoons, comics strips and book illustrations.He was inspired by his father's passion for shadow puppets and cinematography. He was inspired by pop art.. His artistic journey was started in Shantiniketan. He was a student of santiniketan, kala bhavan . Basically he is a urban fellow and he brought up in a Metropolis .He had very little relationship with nature that way he brought up. But as a day passed by for different reason and by destiny he went to shantiniketan. And that was totally very exceptional new journey for him .Then when he came beside a nature there

he witnessed a vast nature , wide open skies, a farmland, palm trees and all other things which he never experienced before. At the same time he used to move around the nature in the villages, Santhal villages with his bicycle. That was a very favourite spot of him to study the animals and the life of the santhals . Specially he was very fond of to draw the animlas like dogs , buffaloes , ducks and donkeys . there are 20 of donkeys there that time in shantiniketan when he was a student there.The faculties of the shantiniketan , which were the galaxies in Indian art. K.G.Subramanyan , artists like

Somnath Hore , Jogen Chowdhury was there . He get in his life all the great artists history of Indian Art.

He made a series of portrait with some famous personalities who are related to santiniketan .Actually it was made near about 30 portraits in Linocut with personalities who worked and contributed santiniketan in a different way.He made the portaraits for a book written by Samindranath Bandopadhyaya , a series of linocut print printed there. Later days , after his passing out he joined in Lalit kala Akdemi of Kolkata . He was taught in a printmaking department .It was a blend of etching and lithography. He worked

with these medium . That was a very interesting part of his life because there were a group of very creative printmaker artist and Lalit Kala Akademy that was another great journey of his life.

Then he started to see Calcutta in a very different way.It was a time of his straggling calcutta become a friend of him ,that time calcutta was a companion of it . He grew up with its everything , with the possessions , political hungriest ,With exhibitions, with lot of seminars and all other things . Last ten years he have affect a new medium its called 'Paper construction '. The paper construction is a combination of prints , used prints ,photographs , drawings, painted things, some collagraphs and a combination of lot of things which gave a three dimentional surface.

He Take inspiration from Nandalal Bose's illustrations in Sahaj Path ,and his printmaking practices evolved around positive and negative equilibrium. His linocut and woodcuts are performed in black and white contrast.He designs illustrations in the relief printmaking medium.

Figure: 15. Parag Roy

The Divine Tigress, 2024

Coloured woodcut

24x18 inch

Conclusion

This research journey has not only obtained my understanding of the use of metaphor in contemporary art but also provided invaluable insights which will influence my future work. Through the examining artists like Atin Basak and Parag Roy I have gained a lot of things , a new appreciation for the ordinary elements of everyday life and express their significance through artistic way.

By exploring the works of other notable artists including them , I have expanded my knowledge base and discovered a new way for creative exploration.Each Artists brings a individual unique perspective to the theme of mundanity .

List of Figures/Plates

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Figure 2. Printing press of Goa, India

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Figure 4 Mahabhanjan

Figure 5 Nabin kilss Elokeshi

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Figure 8 Silent presence

Figure 9 'Fossil (Life and Mortality)

Figure 10 Song of silence' /Etching

Figure: 11 Studio View of artist (Atin Basak)

Figure: 12 The Divine Tigress,2024.

Photo Credit

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- Photograph by the author.(2025,April 12) Studio view of artist (Atin Basak)[Photograph].Kolkata.

- Acharya Riparna, (2025,April 12) Personal Intervie3

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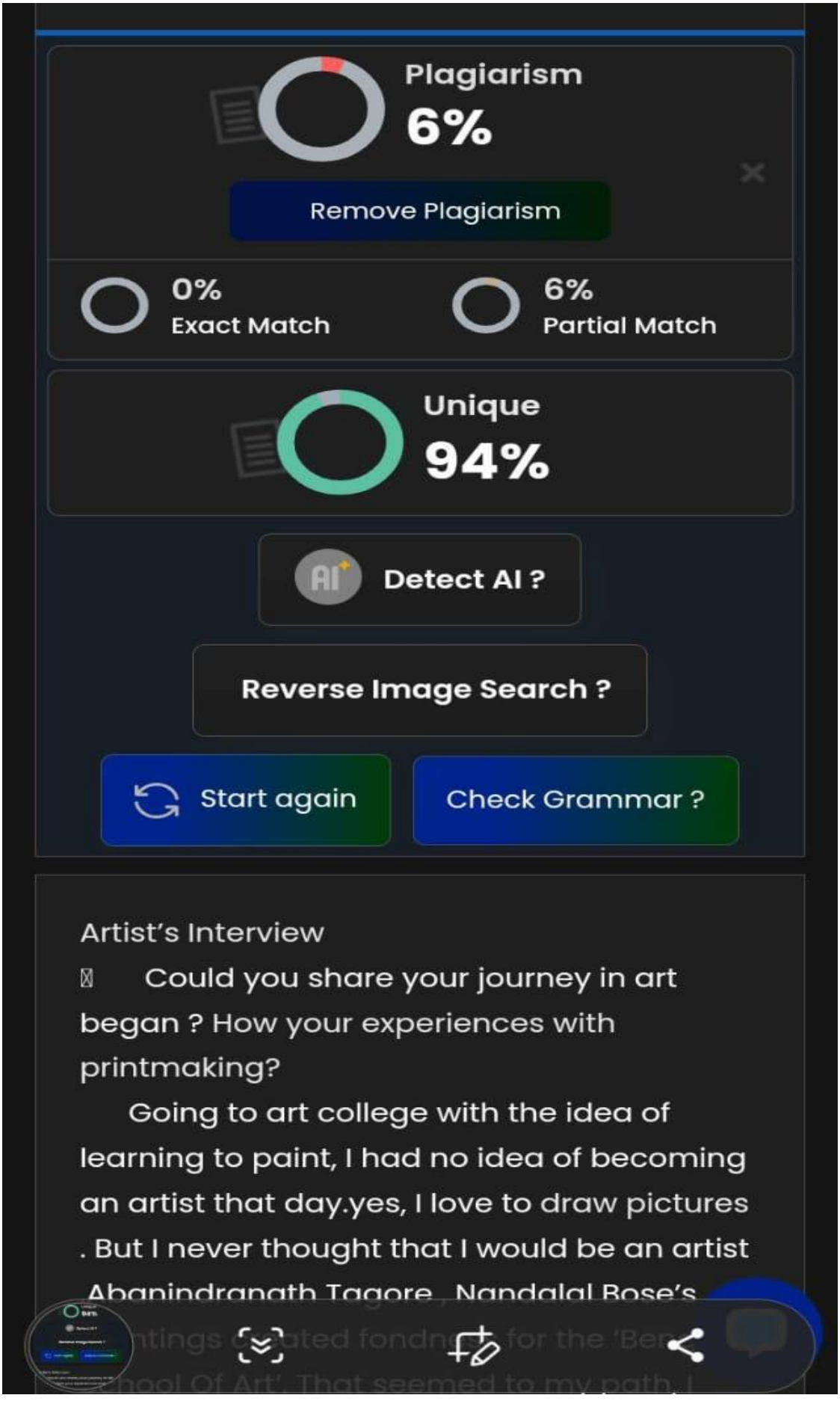
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Artist's Interview
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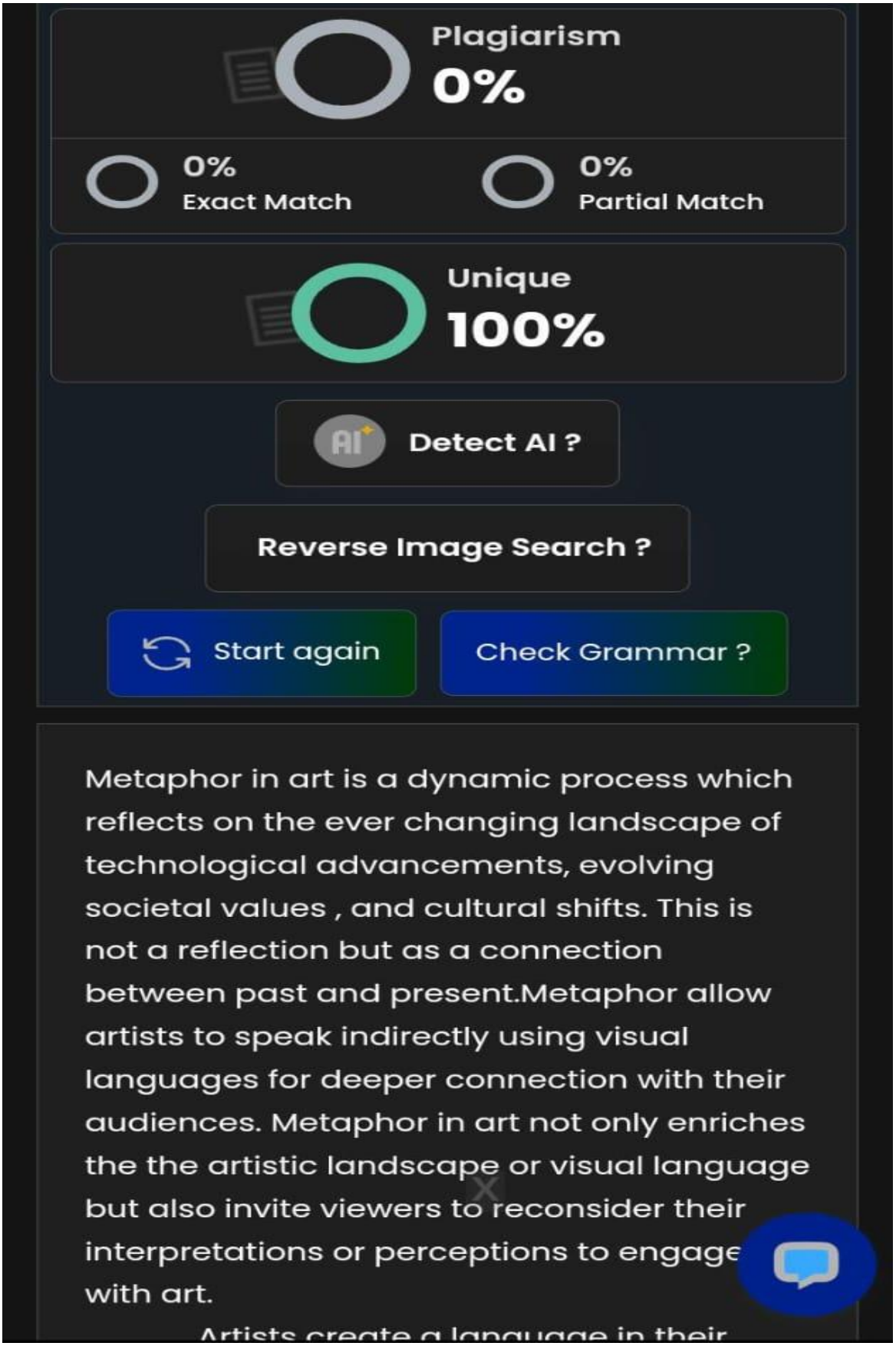
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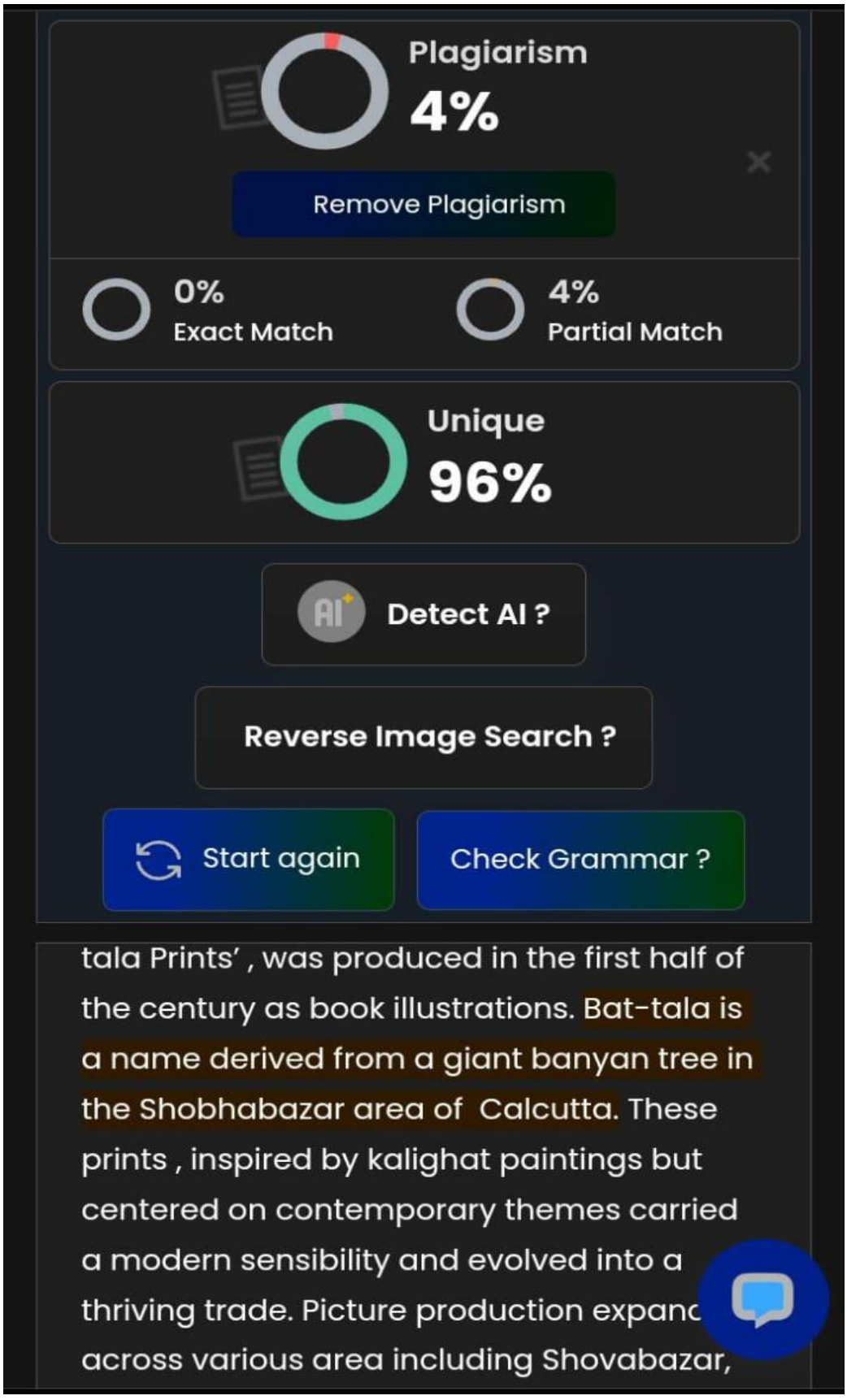
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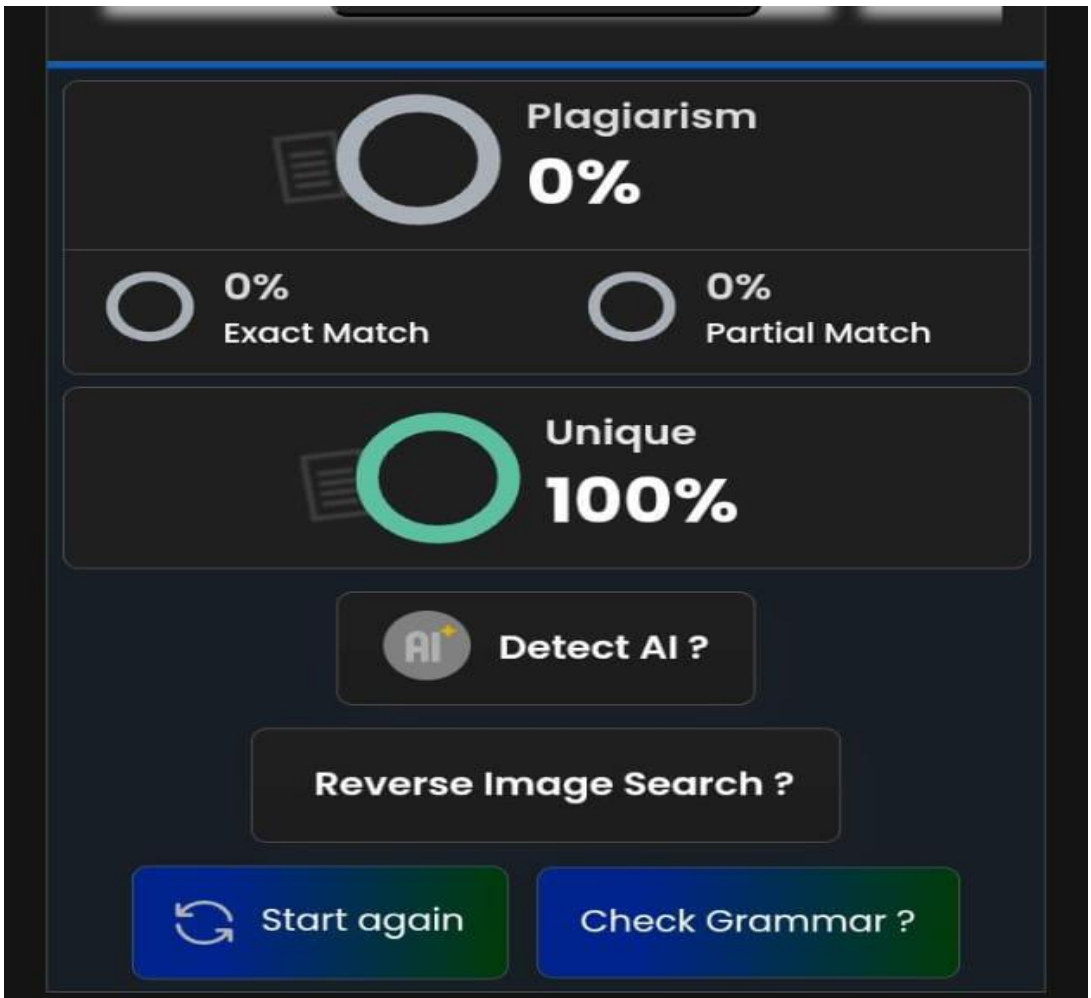
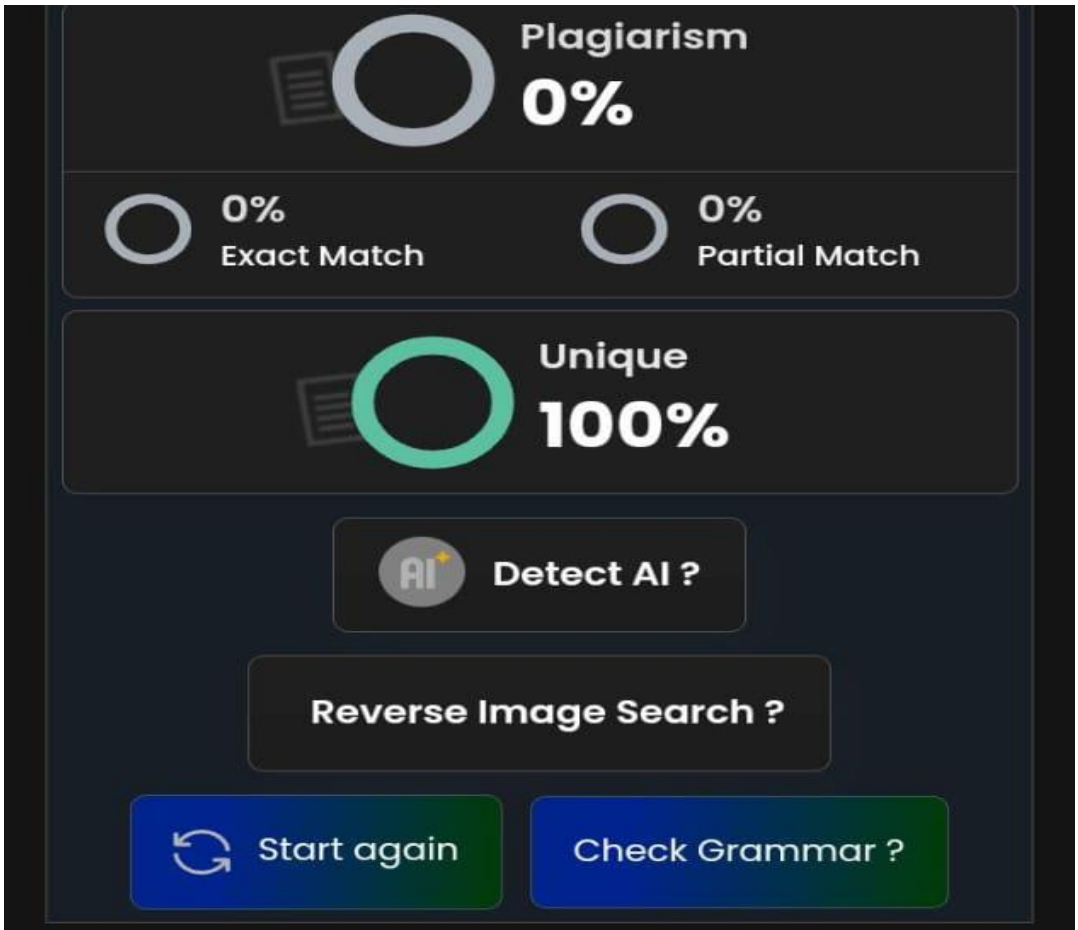
thriving trade. Picture production expanc
across various area including Shovabazar,



Evolution of printmaking

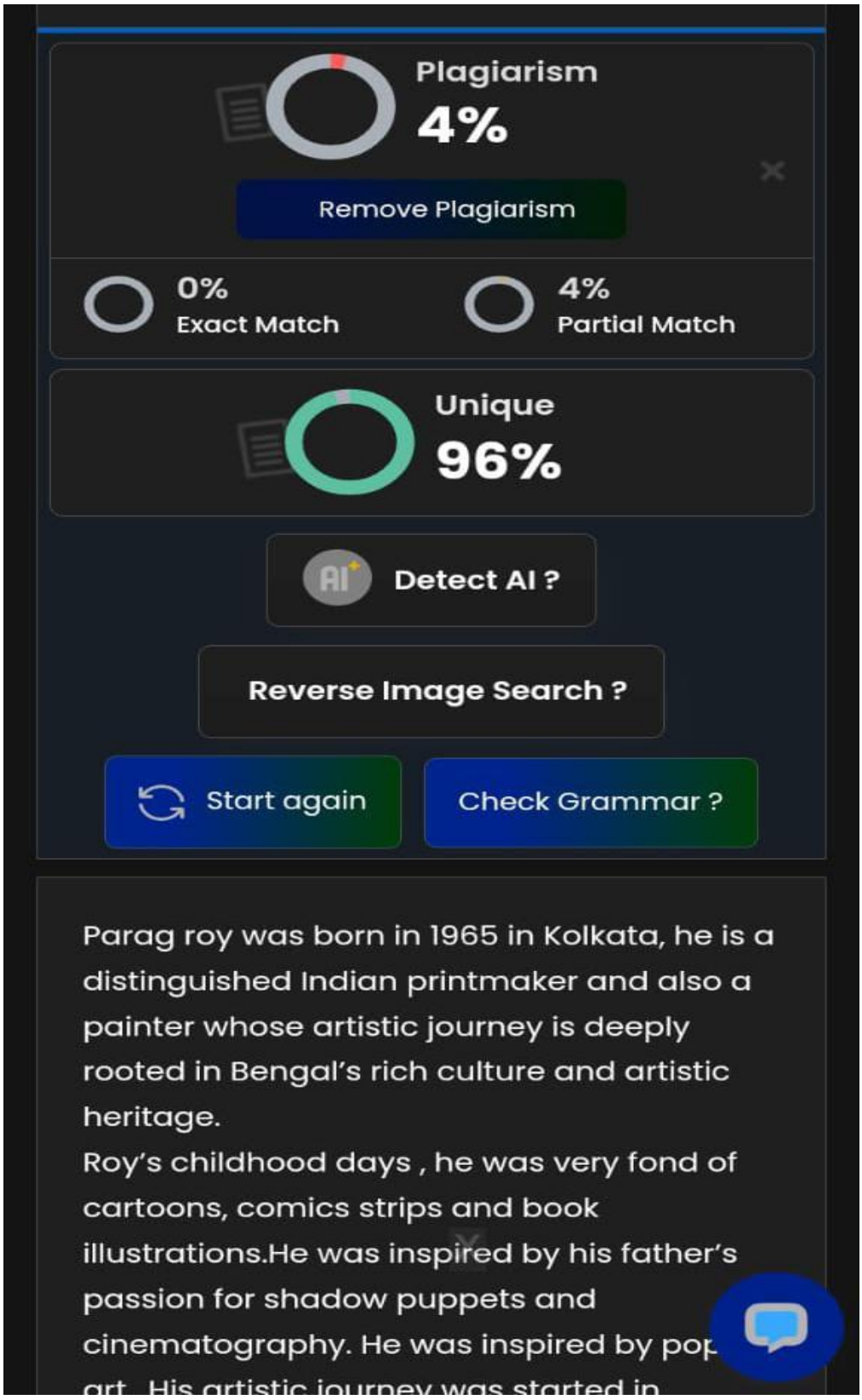
The evolution of printmaking in kolkata reflects a rich journey from colonial craftsmanship to contemporary artistic expression. In 1556, printmaking began evolving from traditional techniques to contemporary methods influenced by British artists and local innovations in India.

A long time ago before printmaking was being used commercially, Prints were used for mass production of newspapers,books,writing etc.Then, Artists,



Atin Basak

Atin Basak was born on 27th March,1996 in Kolkata .He is a prominent Indian Printmaker of kolkata. His family had shifted to Kolkata from Manikgunj, Dhaka (now in Basngladesh). He grew up in a ghinji office neighborhood in old central Calcutta .Name: 'Boithokh khana road ' .He spent his most of the time with his grandmother, almost all the time of the day. Atin was very shy in his childhood and he did not talk too much. Since then He lived in his own dream wor world of fantasy. He was a daydreamer . loved being curled up there. Only his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Parag roy was born in 1965 in Kolkata, he is a distinguished Indian printmaker and also a painter whose artistic journey is deeply rooted in Bengal's rich culture and artistic heritage.
Roy's childhood days , he was very fond of cartoons, comics strips and book illustrations.He was inspired by his father's passion for shadow puppets and cinematography. He was inspired by pop